

A Modern Reading of Dewey Together with Freinet and Adler

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When I, in the year 2000, began my position as principal at Freinetskolan Mimer, a private school in Norrtälje, I did a review of the work methods, routines and quality of instruction at the school. My impression as a new leader for the school was that the methods and instruction were of very high quality. In certain areas the work methods could be strengthened and improved. Such a development project concerned the children's possibility to develop their thinking regarding value questions and ethical dilemmas through Socratic seminars as a work method¹, with the methods used for example at the Paideia schools in the USA as a starting point. As a result of this work I will follow the project in my position of doctoral student at the Stockholm Institute of Education as a part of my dissertation.

I am therefore doing a research project at Freinetskolan Mimer within two theoretical worlds, that of Freinet pedagogy, and that of the Paideia movement, founded by Mortimer J. Adler. Freinet pedagogy grew out of the interwar period, during the 1920's and 30's in France. The Paideia Group gave out their manifesto in the early 1980's. Working with Socratic seminars within the framework of Freinet pedagogy has led to a series of questions: Is it possible to integrate another pedagogical direction into that of Freinet pedagogy? Are there great differences between the underlying theories? Are Adler's pedagogical ideas more adjusted to the type of school that is needed in a post-modern society? The connection between Adler and Freinet seems to me to be the ideas of John Dewey. Below I will reflect over the similarities and differences between some of Dewey's basic ideas about school, its work methods and goals, and the ideas that Celestin Freinet and Mortimer J. Adler suggest as central. I have chosen to go through their views regarding school's mandate, learning as an occurrence, the view of curriculum, the role of the teacher, how learning takes place, the importance of practical work as well as the significance of language for learning². The selection is made from those areas that Celestin Freinet emphasises as the most important within Freinet pedagogy.

John Dewey, Democracy and Education

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher and amongst many other subjects came to be interested in pedagogical questions. His work laid the theoretical ground for progressive pedagogy in the USA and has inspired a majority of the progressive pedagogical fields that have developed in different countries during the beginning of the 20th century. Dewey's work has amongst other things had a clear influence on the development of the Swedish educational system. His academic career was long and comprehensive. He was for example a professor at the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, and Columbia University. His literary productions are, mildly said, incredibly extensive, including some forty books and over seven hundred articles. With titles like "My Pedagogical Creed" (1899), "How We Think" (1910) and "Democracy and Education" (1916), he discusses subjects such as social questions, pedagogy, religion, ethics, democracy etc. Dewey is considered a pragmatist and sets aside things such as traditional philosophic questions about truth and pretence, mind and matter etc. in order to devote himself to the practical questions of society of the time, but in a philosophical way, through analysis and ideas³. "Intelligent action" was the objective of his philosophy, in other words, to analyse the world around and explore conceivable solutions and afterwards freely convert valid ideas into action.

During his time as professor of philosophy in Chicago, he started an experimental school (1896)

¹ Socratic seminar is a type of philosophising discussion in child or adult groups. The group philosophises over ethical questions with a text, artwork, a movie, or something similar as the starting point. See Lars Lindström, 1993

² There are similarities in approach between all three in several areas, for example in the negative outlook on tests and grades and on memorising.

³ Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, "Individ, skola och samhälle" 2004 (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society)

together with his wife Alice Chipman Dewey. Despite the fact that he was considered the master of progressive pedagogy, he was quite critical to the direction that progressive pedagogy took with some of his successors. By the mid 1900's Dewey's influence diminished both in the USA and internationally, most likely because of the opposition he faced from the Catholic Church in America and the American Communist Party. The American Communist Party regarded Dewey, as a radical pragmatic, to be very interesting. They wanted to see a union between Dewey's philosophical ideas and Marxism. Dewey showed interest in the reforms of the young Soviet Union and visited the country in 1928. He met a variety of people including Nadezjda Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, who was at that time Commissariat of Education and was responsible for the educational reforms in the country. Krupskaya was in turn influenced by Dewey. After his visit, he became positive to the Soviet way of dealing with change, because of which the American Communist party were hopeful of possible co-operation. Dewey was against this though, and increasingly became openly critical to communism and Marxist ideas. The antagonisms culminated when Dewey led the commission that examined accusations towards Leon Trotsky in Moscow 1937. After this interest in Dewey decreased dramatically in the Soviet Union as well⁴.

Religion was of great significance in Dewey's life. He developed from a conservative evangelical Christian upbringing to become a religious liberal, who in different writings made serious attempts to merge his Christian faith with his philosophical conviction. Finally in "A Common Faith" 1934 he changed over to a type of naturalistic religious humanism, where the concept of God is no longer personified, or supernatural, but rather something that represents an active relation to an ideal. Christian conservatives regarded this quite negatively⁵.

Further causes for Dewey's diminished influence was the fear in the USA that the state would fall behind in the Space Race against the Soviets, where they did not work with the same progressive and student-centred pedagogical focus. Today there is new interest in Dewey and his ideas, according to Sven Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in their foreword to a new edition of Dewey's writings in "Individ, skola och samhälle" (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society).

In the beginning of his career John Dewey was strongly influenced by Hegel, an influence that admittedly decreased afterwards, but that is still visible in his later texts and in his wish to unify seemingly opposing concepts in a dialectical synthesis. He was also influenced by Rousseau and Darwin, but even reflects ideas from the American Enlightenment and pedagogical ideas from Thomas Jefferson and Horace Mann⁶.

Celestin Freinet and Freinet Pedagogy

Celestin Freinet (born 1896) was a Frenchman and pedagogue from the 1920's until his death in 1966. He developed a pedagogical focus that is today represented in a number of countries, including Sweden through individual pedagogues, but also through a number of private schools, such as Freinetskolan Mimer in Norrtälje. There are clear similarities between the foundation of Freinet pedagogy and the ideas of John Dewey.

Celestin Freinet was an officer during the First World War, but suffered from a lung injury and therefore came to start a lifework as a pedagogue in a village school on the French countryside. With time he came to organise a large group of interested teachers in a co-operative in order to further develop the pedagogy. The movement is today an international association for pedagogues⁷.

Freinet wrote a number of books and articles focusing on practical work methods. His most well known book "Pour L'École Du Peuple" (translator's note: For a School of the People) was written during the Second World War, when he was seen as politically dangerous by the nazi-friendly French Vichy

⁴ Robert B Westbrook in "John Dewey and American Democracy", 1991

⁵ Alan Ryan in "John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism", 1995

⁶ Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, "Individ, skola och samhälle", 1980 (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society)

⁷ The International Freinet Movement: FIMEM, Fédération Internationale des Mouvements d'École Moderne French Headquarters. The Swedish Freinet Movement "[Freinetrörelsen i Sverige, Kooperativet Arbetets Pedagogik, KAP](http://www.freinet.se)" www.freinet.se

government and sent to an internment camp. He made relatively few references to theories or theorists, but in different writings mentions some of his influences: Rabelais, Montaigne, Rousseau, Fichte, Ferrière, Ferrer, Piaget, Montessori, and the Soviet Union's school program⁸. Freinet was strongly inspired by Ovide Decroly⁹, the Belgian pedagogue, who was in turn strongly influenced by Dewey¹⁰. Maria Montessori was also strongly influenced by Dewey and his successors during her visits to the USA¹¹. She and Freinet carried on a debate where there is a mutual appreciation but also polemic. In 1925 Freinet visited the Soviet Union and, just like Dewey would a few years later, met among others, Nadezjda Krupskaja who was then the Commissariat of Education¹². During his visit he learned about the new Soviet school system, which has previously been mentioned as being strongly influenced by Dewey's ideas¹³.

Despite the fact that the influences are, in retrospect, quite apparent, and despite that Dewey was translated to French quite early, Celestin Freinet does not mention Dewey. Gerd B Arfwedson suggests in her dissertation¹⁴ that reform pedagogical attempts are found during the period 1890-1930's in several different countries and forms. She believes that the reform pedagogical currents were a generally western and international phenomenon. An exchange of ideas and influences occurred clearly. Perhaps Freinet did not want to acknowledge being influenced by Dewey. Dewey was an American with periodically a Christian message and during later years an anti-Marxist and anti-communist message. Freinet was a socialist and during an earlier period, a member of the French Communist Party, from which he however requested to resign. He was a strong opponent to the Catholic Church, which he regarded as authoritarian, anti-democratic and conservative. Dewey refers to among others Maria Montessori, but as far as I have been able to find, not to Freinet.

Mortimer J. Adler and the Paideia Program

*“To
Horace Mann
John Dewey
and
Robert Hutchins
who should have been our leaders
were they alive today”*

Mortimer J Adler, “The Paideia Proposal” 1982, page V

So begins “The Paideia Proposal” where Mortimer J. Adler gives an account of the basic pedagogical ideas of the Paideia group. Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902-2001) was, when the book was written, “Director of the Institute for Philosophical Research” in Chicago and author of a series of books and a large number of articles concerning philosophy, language, literature, and politics. In all Adler has written a total of over 60 books with titles such as “Dialectic” (1927), “The Higher Learning in America” (1936), “How to Read a Book” (1940), “How We Think About War and Peace” (1943) and “Six Great Ideas” (1940). His career came to focus for the most part on pedagogical and philosophical questions at American pedagogical and philosophical research institutes, i.e. at Chicago University, the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), the Institute for Philosophical Research and The Aspen Institute.

Adler, like Dewey, started his philosophical path in a dialectical, but unlike Dewey who gradually

⁸ Mats Hemberg and Lutz Kremer in “Örnar går inte i trappor” (translator’s note: Eagles Don’t Walk in Stairs) KRUT no. 69, 1993

⁹ Rolf Malberg in “En bok om arbetets pedagogic”, 1981 (translator’s note: A Book About The Pedagogy of Work)

¹⁰ Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, , “Individ, skola och samhälle”, 1980 (translator’s note: The Individual, School and Society)

¹¹ Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, , “Individ, skola och samhälle”, 1980 (translator’s note: The Individual, School and Society)

¹² Lars Lindström in “Psykologi i teori och praktik”, 1975 (translator’s note: Psychology in Theory and Practice)

¹³ Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, , “Individ, skola och samhälle”, 1980 (translator’s note: The Individual, School and Society)

¹⁴ Gerd B Arfwedson, “Reformpedagogik och samhälle”, 2000 (translator’s note: Reform Pedagogy and Society)

moved on to a more pragmatic approach, with time moved to a more philosophical focus, which was based on the thinking of Aristotle and Thomas of Aquinas. Adler's life-long interest dealt with education of all citizens in a democratic perspective and life-long learning. The classical works, especially within literature, and the great philosophical ideas (Great Books and Great Ideas) became important cornerstones in his view on education. Together with Robert M. Hutchins¹⁵, then president of Chicago University, Adler created "The Great Books Foundation"¹⁶ in 1947 with the goal of creating book circles about classical works. Today the movement in the USA is made up of about 850 circles, which meet in homes, libraries and so on, with thousands of adult participants. There are even programmes intended for young people, mostly through schools and libraries, Junior Great Books, with a publishing house that publishes books and teacher instructions for discussion and with courses for pedagogues.

In 1982 Mortimer J. Adler gathered a group of educators and intellectuals around him in the Paideia Group. The group took as their assignment the creation a series of principles for how the school system would be changed and built up. Adler founded the National Paideia Centre¹⁷ in 1988 to look after the practical side of these changes. The Centre works today to educate and spread knowledge about how the Paideia Principles should be applied in practical schoolwork. Today the pedagogy is widespread and implemented in some 30 schools in the United States. Religion was, just as for Dewey, something that occupied Adler during large parts of his life and in several texts he tries to explain religious questions from a philosophical perspective. He, however, came to a somewhat different result than Dewey. In 1984 at the age of 82, Adler converted (from Judaism or from having been a heathen, as he himself described it) to Christianity.

The first chapter in "The Paideia Proposal" is called "Democracy and Education", and in it Adler (naturally!) makes several references to John Dewey and his effort to create a democratic society through a democratic school, where all children receive the same quality of education. In that chapter the need of a reform of the education system in the USA of 1982 in the spirit of Dewey is established. The Paideia Group suggests through Adler that we have not succeeded at implementing Dewey's ideas, and that we cannot carry on with this failure without there being catastrophic consequences, especially for the democratic society. Like John Dewey, Adler was influenced by ideas from the American Enlightenment and pedagogical ideas from Thomas Jefferson¹⁸ and Horace Mann¹⁹. Adler points out the connection that Jefferson, Mann²⁰ and Hutchins made between a school for "everyone" and democracy. He was also strongly influenced by Socrates' maieutic²¹ approach.

It does not seem controversial to refer to Dewey in a pedagogical manifesto, that suggests a democratisation of school. In Adler's case it was however especially controversial to take such a step. Hutchins, when he was named as president of the University of Chicago, affiliated himself with Adler. The differences of opinion between, on the one side a younger wing led by Hutchins and Adler and on the other, the philosophical faculty of the university, which was strongly influenced by Dewey's views, became obvious and led to a bitter conflict in articles, lectures, and in debates primarily between Adler and Dewey²². Adler's attacks on Dewey were largely based on his belief that Dewey had a blind faith that all knowledge could be attained through experimentation. Dewey's criticism of Adler and Hutchins related to their attempts to introduce a traditional school that only embraced the classical educational ideal²³. In hindsight the fight seems to mostly be based on a series of misunderstandings (or intentional

15 Robert M Hutchins, American educator and university president 1899-1977

16 www.greatbooks.org

17 www.paideia.org

18 Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826, American politician, president of The USA 1801-09

19 Sven G Hartman and Ulf P Lundgren in Dewey, John, "Individ, skola och samhälle", 1980 (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society)

20 Horace Mann, 1796-1856, American education philosopher and politician

21 Comp. Socrates' name for his own method, "maieutic", the art of delivery

22 Adler had encountered Dewey during his time of study and participated in professor Dewey's philosophy course. In his autobiography "Philosopher at Large" Adler describes how he made life miserable for the professor by questioning the conclusions Dewey made during his lectures to the point that Dewey asked him to stop asking questions!

23 Alan Ryan in "John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism" 1995; Mortimer J Adler in "Philosopher at Large", 1977

misunderstandings) of the respective side's pedagogical starting point²⁴.

A real difference which is important from a "philosophical perspective", is however discernable. Dewey's (pragmatic) standpoint can be simply summarised as follows, that people of every new era must formulate what is right or wrong for that time. Moral and humane values are relative and can only be formulated through reflective discussion between the individuals of the society. Adler's point of view has a different starting point but he comes partially to the same conclusion. Adler (in accordance with Plato and Aristotle) considered there to be a set of values, virtues that are constant and common for humanity but that these must be investigated through reflective discussion between people.

In his second autobiography²⁵, Adler describes how his own thoughts about philosophical questions had developed through the years, but also how he discovered that the same applied to Dewey. At the time the Paideia manifesto was formulated, Adler stated that in many aspects Dewey's pedagogical ideas were predecessors to those of the Paideia movement.

School's Mission: Today's School Creates Tomorrow's Society

Through reading a selection of Dewey's, Adler's and Freinet's texts one is stricken by a series of structural similarities, both in the partially summoning language, but also in the structure, the way in which the ideas are presented. Dewey, in "**My Pedagogical Creed**" first published in 1897, presents his basic ideas in five "articles". Celestin Freinet in "**Pour L'École Du Peuple**" presents his 30 "constants". Mortimer J. Adler and the Paideia Group present their basic ideas in "**The Paideia Proposal An Educational Manifesto**". Only by examining the titles (which are in bold text) is it possible to see that all three if anything intend to write manifestos rather than handbooks for practical pedagogy.

The language of all three also occasionally resembles that of an inflammatory speech rather than of pedagogical or theoretical texts. In the introduction to "Pour L'École Du Peuple" (which Freinet incidentally prepared the basis for when he was sent to an internment camp by the Vichy government during the Second World War) he laid out the following principles for his pedagogy:

"The child must develop his personality as much as possible within a rational fellowship, that he benefits and that benefits him. He must complete his destiny and accomplish his dignity and strength, so that he can prepare himself to as an adult person work effectively and distant from all egotistical lies to create a society in harmony and equality."

Celestin Freinet, För folkets skola, pages 27-28 (Swedish edition of "Pour L'École Du Peuple")

Adler defines the Paideia Group's objectives as follows:

"Our concern is double-edged. We have two fundamental goals in view. One is equipping all the children of this country to earn a good living for themselves. The other is enabling them to lead good human lives. /-/-/ Achieving peace, prosperity and plenty could put this country on the edge of becoming an earthly paradise, but only a much better educational system than now exists can carry us across the threshold."

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, pages 73 and 79

In "My Pedagogical Creed" Dewey maintains:

²⁴ Gerd B Arfwedson (1998) accounts for a way of classifying instructional theories based on their view of education, which is based on a German educational philosophy. Here a difference is made between formal and material instructional theories. The formal theories instruct with the student, the child as the starting point. The formal instructional theories can in turn be divided up into theories on functional education and methodical education, which sometimes can appear individually, sometimes together. The functional line maintains that the young person is educated when her whole potential is made use of. The methodical education emphasises instead that the child should have a good command of learning strategies and so on. Material instructional methods have instead the material as central. A person is seen as educated when she has acquainted herself with the most important works in our educational heritage, which has what Arfwedson calls "an encyclopaedic knowledge" (page 84). Described in these terms one of the great misunderstandings in the disputes seems to have been that Dewey and his supporters understood Adler's and Hutchins' ideas as the result of the traditional "material" concept. Adler and Hutchins intended however to unify a "formal" and "methodical" efforts with the classical works as a starting point in their philosophical discussions. Adler's criticisms against Dewey were about his much too rigorous "formal" and "functional" line.

²⁵ Mortimer J Adler, "A Second Look in the Rearview Mirror", 1992

"I believe that in the ideal school we have the reconciliation of the individualistic and the institutional ideals.

I believe that the community's duty to education is, therefore, its paramount moral duty"

John Dewey, My Pedagogic Creed, Article five, The school and social progress, in The Early Works, p. 94

All three seem inspired by a mission to build the society of tomorrow as a real democracy, that is, a democracy where the citizens are capable of actively participating in the creation of a good society²⁶. The mission is more than to present a pedagogical philosophy or method. It is revolutionary and re-creating.

"The hope of life must be the secretive Ariadne's thread that leads us on our fumbling journey from the one constant to the next on the way to our common goal: the development of the child into the person of tomorrow."

Celestin Freinet, Constant nr 30, För folkets skola, page 199 (Swedish edition of "Pour L'École Du Peuple")

"The innermost meaning of social equality is: substantially the same quality of life for all. This calls for: The same quality of schooling for all. /-/ There are no unteachable children. There are only schools and teachers and parents who fail to teach them."

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, pages 5-6 and 9

"I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform."

John Dewey, My Pedagogic Creed, Article five, The school and social progress, in The Early Works, p. 93

Learning As An Occurrence: Life-Long Learning

Just like Dewey, Adler draws attention to "life long learning". For Dewey it is a type of "growth", something that is ongoing (even if the growth is greatest for children), while Adler defines it as a learning process, an education. For Dewey the concept is a connection to the biological conditions of each person, with certain social consequences, while Adler views it as a simultaneous biological and social process.

Freinet calls attention to the fact that it is important to realise that pedagogy must change, since times change. Therefore, he encourages pedagogues to continue developing Freinet pedagogy and not to see the advice or methods that he recommends as complete. Freinet is not as clear regarding his belief in life-long learning, but states that children strive to become adults and it is the role of education to make sure that the adult life is a good one.

Like Dewey, Freinet emphasises both the importance of the individual and of the social group for child development. Like Dewey Freinet also says that school is a part of life, not a time of waiting and preparation for something to come. School creates the society of tomorrow, but children also learn to understand their role in society through school since it in itself is a society whose processes resemble societal processes.

A taking of positions is also apparent in both men's criticisms of other pedagogues. Freinet for example held up Montessori as a role model with regards to her view of children, but criticised her detailed, adult manufactured material and work procedure, as well as her sole focus on the child's maturity, a matter over which even Dewey raised similar concerns against for example Montessori and Fröbel etc. For Adler however, the criticism of other "progressive" pedagogues seems passé. He crassly states that the present school has failed in its attempts to develop individuals and democracy and offers an alternative work method.

²⁶ In 1927 John Dewey accounts for his view on democracy and the citizens' participation in creating a democratic society for example in "The Public and its Problems". He conveys for example that democracy must be reformulated, redefined based on the needs of the time and that the citizens must therefore constantly carry on discussions, and communicate about what is best in different situations.

Freinet also thought that Montessori's training of Montessori pedagogues could hardly lead to any pedagogical insight. Instead of educating the pedagogues they should organise themselves in a reflective co-operative, that together should search for insight. That deeper understanding cannot be reached solely through education is even the position of Adler:

"No amount of schooling, as was said earlier, can produce an educated person. To be truly educated is a state achieved by self-direction, usually long after schooling is completed, in the later years of life."

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, page 58

Freinet's thoughts can also be interpreted as an idea that learning is a life-long process, even if he does not directly state it, as Dewey and Adler do.

View of Curriculum: Subject-integration and Authenticity

Freinet believes that the traditional school has centred on instructional material and curriculum as a manifestation of that, but that the school of tomorrow will be centred on the child as a citizen of society. He views these things as opposing to a certain extent, unlike Dewey, who tries to integrate the child and curriculum, for example in "The Child and the Curriculum" from 1902:

"Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies."

John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum, in The Middle Works, p. 278

None of them regard subject divisions as natural:

"Classification is not a matter of child experience; things do not come to the individual pigeon-holed."

John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum, in The Middle Works, p. 274-275

Adler seems more or less to take for granted that subject division is hardly a positive phenomenon. He clearly suggests however that it is important to allow children and youths to receive a common, cohesive education, without choosing a field, or being divided into vocational and academic education during K-12²⁷. Adler's motivation for this is that school must provide for three areas in student development: Self-improvement, creation of good citizens of society, and creation of personal livelihood.

*"To achieve these three goals, basic schooling must have for all a quality that can be best defined, **positively**, by saying that it must be general and liberal; and **negatively**, by saying that it must be nonspecialized and nonconvocational."*

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, page 18.

According to Adler these goals can be achieved through using three instructional methods. He calls these methods "columns" and says that these are to be seen as the curriculum of Paideia schools:

1. Acquisition of organized knowledge, new knowledge by means of didactic instructions, lectures and responses
2. Development of intellectual skills – skills of learning by means of coaching, exercises and supervised practice
3. Enlarged understanding of ideas and values by means of maieutic or Socratic questioning and active participation, including artistic activities

²⁷ A thought that besides can traced back to Hutchins' world of ideas (K-12 entails kindergarten, preschool up to and including grade 12)

A connection to Dewey's ideas is directly traceable here:

"Learning involves, as just said, at least three factors: knowledge, skill and character. Each of these must be studied."

John Dewey, Progressive Education and the Science of Education, in The Later Works, p. 267-268

The work method that is recommended by all is thematic and subject integrated, not with subject divisions, a work method that resonates from the child's interests and consists of authentic work activities²⁸.

The Role of the Teacher: Fellow Man or "The First Among Equals"

For Adler these three points have clear consequences for the role of the teacher. Point 1 assumes the teacher to be didactic, in point 2 the teacher becomes a coach and in point 3 a "midwife"²⁹, who helps deliver the student's own ideas. Freinet, in his methodological directions for Freinet pedagogy, emphasises rather point 2 and partially point 3 of Adler's divisions. Freinet, like Dewey in for example "My Pedagogical Creed" and "Experience and Education", says that the teacher should be a fellow man, admittedly a more knowledgeable one, but a part of the social group in the school. This has in both cases consequences for how discipline and structure should be established in the group:

"The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences.

I believe that the discipline of the school should proceed from the life of the school as a whole and not directly from the teacher."

John Dewey, My Pedagogic Creed, in The Early Works, p. 88

"The democracy of tomorrow is prepared for through democracy in school. An authoritarian regime cannot develop democratic citizens."

Celestin Freinet, Constant nr 27, För folkets skola, page 196 (Swedish edition of "Pour L'École Du Peuple")

In Adler's case, the teacher has this role foremost in the Socratic seminars:

"The teacher's role in discussion is to keep it going along fruitful lines – by moderating, guiding, correcting, leading and arguing like one more student! The teacher is first among equals."

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, page 54

How Learning Takes Place: Enquiry-Based Learning Gives Experience

In constants number 11 and 13 Freinet says:

"The normal method of acquiring knowledge is not through observation, explanation and demonstration, as is most common in school, but rather through enquiry-based learning, which is a natural and universal course of action. /--/ One does not gain knowledge through studying rules and laws, as some believe, but through experience."

Celestin Freinet, För folkets skola pages 179, 180 (Swedish edition of "Pour L'École Du Peuple")

Experience therefore precedes knowledge, (or is the first, most important part of knowledge). For Dewey there seems to occur a development of thoughts about one's own experiences as the main source of knowledge between what he writes in for example "The School and Society" (1899) and in "The Child and the Curriculum" (1902). In the latter he says that, if anything, the curriculum should be

²⁸ Authentic assignments include work assignments and projects, themes that children can understand as assignments that are "real", not constructed exercises for school. Counting by shopping in a store could be an authentic assignment, even if the store is a "pretend store" in the classroom, while counting with blocks is not an authentic work assignment, since the child has difficulty seeing the parallel to reality outside of the classroom.

²⁹ Comp. Socrates' name for his own method, "maieutic", the art of delivery

guided by objectives, not entirely guided by the child's "enquiry-based learning" or entirely by individual experiences, but rather, directed, goal-oriented experiences with qualities that could further develop the child:

"The systematized and defined experience of the adult mind, in other words, is of value to us in interpreting the child's life as it immediately shows itself, and in passing on to guidance or direction."

John Dewey, The Child and The Curriculum, in The Middle Works, p. 279

The teacher also receives a new role, as the child's own experiences should be directed. It is no longer a matter of waiting for the child's own initiative or maturity. In 1928 John Dewey accepted the position of honorary chairman in The Progressive Education Association. In his speech he took the opportunity to make a number of criticisms regarding the development progressive education had made as well as to make a number of clarifications of his own viewpoints. The lecture is rendered in "Progressive Education and the Science of Education". He further clarifies the role of the teacher:

"While in outward form, these remarks are given to show that the teacher, as the member of the group having the riper and fuller experience and the greater insight into the possibilities of continuous development found in any suggested project, has not only the right but the duty to suggest lines of activity, and to adult imposition provided that teacher knows children as well as subjects, their import is not exhausted in bringing out this fact."

John Dewey, Progressive Education and the Science of Education, in The Later Works, p. 266

Adler is the only one of the three who emphasises the role of the principal:

"The effectiveness of even the best trained teacher will depend on the role played by the principal of the school in which they teach."

Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Proposal, page 61

The Importance of Practical Work: The Work of the Hand is as Important as That of Intellect

Freinet emphasises that the work of the hand is as important as that of intellect. For Freinet it is a matter of the equality of all work, but also as a part of the individual's development of him/herself. The work of the hand also has an important role in Dewey's experimental school, but for a different reason, namely as a means of "rediscovering" the origin of the techniques and science of our time as well as of making use of the child's inherent instincts. For both Freinet and Dewey this means that "the work of the hand" does not simply entail artistic expression, but also the work itself, that is to say work to improve and adorn the school, work with different "responsibilities" such as cleaning the classroom, setting the table and so on. Adler reasons as if he, rather than anything, seems to take it for granted that we all realise the importance of practical work. Unlike Freinet, Adler's viewpoint seems also to be that creative work is a means of understanding the underlying values. Similarly to Freinet, practical work according to Adler can also be about understanding the value of work:

"The best way of understanding a play is to act in it, or at least read it out loud. The best way to understand a piece of music is to sing or play it. The best way to understand a work of dance is to try to dance it. Participation in the creation of works of art is as important as viewing, listening to, and discussing them. All children should have such pleasurable experiences. /--/This experience might range from volunteer work in a hospital, to part-time work in a factory, office, newspaper, or government bureau, to participation in Junior Achievement. What is fundamental is that young people come to understand through experience both the necessity for work and its responsibilities – the attitudes, habits, constraints and satisfactions inseparable from employment."

Mortimer J. Adler, "The Paideia Proposal, pages 23 and 159

For none of the three is "the work of the hand" the same as a school subject such as art, music, handicrafts or drama. Instead, the work should be an integration of each of these parts. Perhaps this approach is best explained through reference to Adler's three columns. All activities should have elements from all three columns, that is to say the work of the hand becomes a part of the thematic project the class carries out, where skills are also trained (column 2), but the work of the hand requires, just like all other activities in teaching, the provision of new knowledge (column 1) and a

creative, reflective dimension (column 3). All must be included.

The Importance of Language: Nurturing of the Individual, Nurturing of the Group, Nurturing of the Democratic Citizen

Freinet and Dewey suggest that the main emphasis in teaching should be on the expression of language, that is to say communication, language as a social activity. For Freinet this means, purely pedagogically, an emphasis on the individual's production in the form of a school newspaper, pen pals, prints and so on. Even Adler points out language in the form of discussion, as an important work method, perhaps most clearly in "column three". There he sees the Socratic seminars as the foremost work method:

"It must be the Socratic mode of teaching, a mode of teaching called "maieutic" because it helps students bring ideas to birth. /--/For mutual understanding and responsible debate among the citizens of a democratic community, and for differences in opinion to be aired and resolved, citizens must be able to communicate with one another in a common language."

Mortimer J. Adler, "The Paideia Proposal, page 29

For Adler the discussions involve partly giving the children the opportunity to participate in "the great conversation" that Hutchins talks about³⁰, but they also involve a moral and ethical nurturing of good citizens of society. For Dewey the discussion and exchange of opinions are the essence of democracy³¹. Dewey suggests that interaction is something that takes place simultaneously between individuals and objects and other individuals, a transaction that takes place simultaneously between the individual and the things that make up his surroundings at the moment³².

Dewey, like Adler, sees ethics as something that should provide guidance but also be tested against life experience because for example, reality and surroundings change and that means that ethics must be interpreted³³. This reasoning, as well as the work method for "intelligent action" within philosophy, as Dewey proposed, is reminiscent in character of Socratic seminars³⁴. It is however unclear if Dewey intended that similar discussions should be held between children and youths, or if they should solely be the task of adults³⁵.

Freinet offers no opposition to the philosophical reflection in the Socratic seminars. His practical solution to ethics, discipline and nurturing are evaluations/ general meetings and wall newspapers where children and teachers together sort out problems, discuss, criticise and praise each other in the working team. It is highly reminiscent of Dewey's proposed work method in "The School and Society" from 1899, namely, presentations:

"A spirit of free communication, of interchange of ideas, suggestions, results, both successes and failures of previous experiences, becomes the dominating note of the recitation."

John Dewey, The School and Society, p. 11

Adler does not specify a corresponding method. Instead he suggests that the principal's function and the positive attitude of parents to the principal's means of upholding rules are important conditions to be able to create a secure and sound learning environment.

³⁰ Robert M Hutchins, American educator and university president 1899-1977

³¹ Sven Hartman in "John Dewey – om reflektivt lärande i skola och samhälle", 2003 (John Dewey - On Reflexive Learning in Schools and Society)

³² John Dewey, "Experience and Education" in "Individ, skola och samhälle", 2004 (rough draft) (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society)

³³ Sven Hartman, Niclas Rönström and Klas Roth in "John Dewey – om reflektivt lärande i skola och samhälle (John Dewey - On Reflexive Learning in Schools and Society)", 2003

³⁴ As previously mentioned Dewey and Adler differ with regards to the question on whether or not values are totally relative (Dewey) or if there is a set of values, virtues that are constant and common for all mankind (Adler).

³⁵ In "How We Think" Dewey gives a detailed account of his view relating to how thinking occurs and in which areas children's thinking should be trained by pedagogues. The book gives a thorough analysis but few practical tips about how the teacher should go about it.

Thus for all three language, communication, is of utmost importance to learning, for the creation of a democratic society, and for the socialisation of students as democratic citizens. For Dewey and Freinet, socialisation takes place in relation to the individual peer group through nurturing in evaluations, presentations and class council, within the frames for the class's co-operative³⁶. Adler's socialisation takes place in the group but does not include everyday issues and the group's daily events, in any case not primarily. It is rather a socialisation to become a part of the continuous human history.

Criticism of Progressive Pedagogy

Gerd B. Arfwedson³⁷ suggests that the attempts of reform pedagogy subside during the 1930's, in large part due to the changes in political and societal conditions. They however still remained in certain parts through practical application and came to have an effect on the school political area, mostly in the form of rhetoric in debates and curriculum. On the other hand, some practical elements have been a lasting part of what we now see as obvious in school. Woodworking, textile crafts, physical education, health controls, fieldtrips, class trips, and school camp are such things that were introduced as more or less revolutionary elements through progressive pedagogy. The practice of progressive pedagogy had a short renaissance during the period 1967-1975, but that was significantly more aimed at the effective development and learning of the child. The socio-pedagogical element that existed in the earlier movement was gone, according to Arfwedson.

American critics of progressivism have amongst other things maintained that the emphasis on work, in particular with regards to the older students, satisfied industrialism's need for labour. Arfwedson suggests that it was hardly the intention of reform pedagogues but that they, despite everything, contributed to the adjustment of school to meet a new period, that of industrialism. A more far-reaching criticism was brought to bear by Basil Bernstein and Ulf P. Lundgren³⁸ in 1983. They believed that an altogether too large emphasis on individualisation can lead to the favouring of middle class children and that contrary to the stated aims of the pedagogy, it could become an operation that sifts children into groups based on the needs of the market. They also believed that there is a risk that language, the codes that are used in the school situation are based on the codes and values of the middle class and that the invisible codes remain invisible for children from working class homes.

Additional critics have maintained that the pedagogy totally concentrated on the future and with that did not take consideration to or discuss the humanistic legacy. Instead the practical aspect of learning is over emphasised. It does not however seem to be incompatible to work with a progressive work method and at the same time emphasise education. That Dewey's and Adler's views at an earlier stage differ on this point are if anything to be found in the origins of American progressivism in pragmatism. German progressivism had for example very deep roots in education as an idea³⁹, just as for example, the progressive movements within Swedish popular adult education⁴⁰.

Dewey's own criticism against his progressive successors points to some other areas where the progressive movement at times has been criticised. There was a tendency in certain groups, according to him, to idealise the child and simplify the complexities in the acquisition of knowledge and development. He, as previously mentioned, also criticised the belief that the activities and experimentation of the child are sufficient for learning to occur.

³⁶ For Dewey there is a shifting in the concept of democracy from the earlier texts, for example "The Ethics of Democracy", written in 1888, where he emphasises the co-operative community in close, small groups as the essence of democracy, to the later texts, for example "The Public and its Problems", written in 1927, when he points out that there must also be a public, formal political sphere. See also Axel Honneth's chapter "Demokrati som reflexive samverkan. John Dewey och den samtida demokratiteorin", 2003 (translator's note: Democracy as Reflexive Collaboration. John Dewey and the Contemporary Democracy Theory)

³⁷ Gerd B Arfwedson "Reformpedagogik och samhälle", 2000 (translator's note: Reform Pedagogy and Society)

³⁸ Basil Bernstein; Ulf P Lundgren, "Makt, kontroll och pedagogik, 1983 (translator's note: Power, Control and Pedagogy)"

³⁹ Gerd B Arfwedson "Reformpedagogik och samhälle", 2000 (translator's note: Reform Pedagogy and Society)

⁴⁰ Comp. i.e. Hans Larsson's and Alf Ahlberg's educational ideas

Dewey, Freinet and Adler Read Together

Dewey's efforts are incredibly extensive, both with regards to amount and subject range. He appears foremost as a typical theoretician, despite his experiences from work with his experimental school, with the University of Chicago, as he outlines in for example "The School and Society"⁴¹. As a philosopher he seems to be pragmatic that is to say, closer to a practical reality. Adler is, in many respects, a pure academic, who also produces an incredible amount, but gradually develops a practical pedagogy with philosophy as an important element. Freinet on the other hand, presents himself as a pure practitioner and does not claim to theorise, but theories are clearly discernable through his methodical directions. All three use a high-flown language, but in the same breath offer practical solutions⁴². Why? The language, in particular that of Dewey and Freinet, is in places complex and "unclear" – this has certainly contributed to the creation of successors who they personally may not have necessarily always accepted. Dewey distanced himself from his successors in several articles. Since its formation in 1977 the Freinet movement in Sweden has periodically been shaken by internal disputes about who has the "correct" interpretation of what Freinet meant.

All three were driven by strong, personal convictions that they gradually developed and revised. Their personal convictions are similar in certain instances, while in other cases they are strongly divided. Despite this they all seem to have been inspired by a common mission – to change and develop society into a good place to live, a democratic society created through meetings and where meetings between different people, groups and ideas create a democratic society. The path becomes the goal and the goal becomes the path. The theoretical and practical ideas are described while at the same time work towards change has begun. Their texts are not only theory or practical advice; they are the beginning of the change that they would like to bring about. They go through the change while they describe it and change the description as they have new experiences.

The forms of meeting, the discussion, look differently for the three. The duty of the democratic citizen according to Freinet becomes evaluation, the wall newspaper, and the class' common work co-operative (and that of the teachers), to give one's opinion, while to Adler it is the Socratic seminars ("shared inquiry"). Adler emphasises that every person should participate in what Hutchins calls "the great conversation", that is to say the discussion that people have conducted about existential questions and values through all times. These ideas of Adler's and Dewey's that moral values gain a deeper meaning through group reflection where different ideas are exchanged, are not as clearly outlined in Freinet's work. One can suspect that Freinet embraces the same ideas when he encourages teachers to reach pedagogical insight through forming co-operatives and meeting to discuss pedagogy, but he emphasises neither the classical values as a tool like Adler, nor that it would be the democratic citizen's duty to participate in discussions about how democracy and society should be formed, as Dewey does.

Dewey, Freinet and Adler in Today's School

Through examination it becomes clear that the three find themselves in partly different contexts, in different times and in different societies. Even if the basic concepts are in many ways similar, the spirit of the times and continuous development will affect the results when the ideas are put into practice. This also affects which idea will be emphasised the most. Freinet, who for example, finds himself imprisoned by the Vichy government when he writes, is expressing himself more categorically and is not as eager to try to merge different themes in a type of dialectical synthesis as Dewey and Adler of later years.

There are certain differences in ideas about the role of the teacher, where Adler's categories are the most differential. It gives an indication of how tendencies to over-emphasise the child's own activities, as Dewey criticised certain progressive pedagogues of, should be further developed. Freinet and the Dewey of early years talk mostly about the teacher as a more knowledgeable fellow being, i.e. the same role that Adler means that the teacher should have in Socratic seminars. Adler though, also

⁴¹ Dewey, John, "Individ, skola och samhälle", 1980 (translator's note: The Individual, School and Society)

⁴² Arfwedson (2000) shows a difference between traditions in the USA respective in Europe/Germany. In the USA it is the philosophers that write and debate while in Europe/Germany it is the teachers themselves.

means that the teacher has an important role as an instructor and as a “coach” in other school activities. According to the Dewey of later years, the teacher role develops in a direction that could mean a similarity to Adler’s⁴³. Dewey and Freinet discuss only the influence and role of parents peripherally, while the influence and role of parents has increased in the end of the 1900’s when Adler writes, which means that he deals with them more thoroughly. Adler also writes about the importance of the work of the principal. In that way he realises the consequences of that the pedagogical ideas must be further refined as development goes on. One can imagine that the role of the principal according to Adler is a consequence of the teachers beginning to reflect and co-operate in groups in the way that Freinet among others wished that they would (instead of as before with closed classroom doors). The staff ends up in the same situation as the children in the functional classroom capacity – in need of a “first among equals”, who can stand for structure and forms of co-operation, but also make sure that the teachers get “ a living and personal experience”⁴⁴.

Through examination and comparison of the texts it becomes clear that Freinet is inspired by and presents ideas that largely correspond with Dewey’s early work. Adler however further develops his ideas from the later Dewey texts. He introduces amongst other things Socratic seminars as a method of working with moral and human values. It is however not a traditional presentation of the humanistic values that he advocates. It is a deeper investigation, reminiscent of Freinet’s “enquiry-based learning” or Dewey’s “experience” or “intelligent action”⁴⁵ but based on classical work. Adler introduces the possibility not just to conduct a discussion with different groups and individuals about important questions as a means to secure democracy in their own time, but also with different historical voices. With that Adler has given solutions to, and further development of, those parts of Freinet’s pedagogy that Dewey would have criticised in a similar way as he had criticised the progressive movement in the USA. Adler also offers a possibility for children to participate with their own thoughts, not adjust themselves to what the teachers consider right or wrong (comp. Bernstein and Lundgren’s criticism above). Through these discussions instruction will not only to be dominated by what is seen for the moment to be “useful”.

Adler has however “dropped” the part that is expressed by Freinet and Dewey that deals with systematised presentations, evaluations/assemblies, where children and teachers investigate problems in everyday life together, discuss, criticise and commend each other in the work group, as a method to work with nurturing and discipline. Perhaps this is the answer to Bernstein and Lundgren’s apprehension that a much too large emphasis on individualisation would lead to the sorting of the groups of children

How then should a pedagogy that wants to create a good post-modern society, a democracy with active, reflective citizens look? Perhaps the solution in today’s school is to use Freinet’s and Adler’s practical methods with Dewey’s theoretical ideas as a compliment to reach the effect that all three aimed for. As we have seen above, all three emphasise the importance of working with democratic values actively during the school years, in discussions and assemblies of different kinds. The work method should be thematic with subject integration and emanate from the interests of the children and be composed of authentic work activities. Here Adler’s categorisation of three instructional forms is useful to explain which elements need to be included, but also what the role of the pedagogue is in the different instructional forms:

1. Acquisition of organized knowledge, new knowledge by means of didactic instructions, lectures and responses, didactic teaching
2. Development of intellectual skills – skills of learning by means of coaching, exercises, supervised practice, thematic studies, experiments, the teacher as coach
3. Enlarged understanding of ideas and values by means of maieutic or Socratic questioning and active participation, including artistic activities, the teacher as fellow human being and “midwife”

⁴³ Freinet in his practical formulation of the pedagogy seems to have acted as Adler’s “coach” in many situations, but the role of the teacher he himself describes in “Pour L’École Du Peuple”, is as a knowledgeable fellow being Björklund, Lind, 1977.

⁴⁴ In “The Child and the Curriculum” Dewey writes about the teacher: “His problem is bringing about a living and personal experience” in “Individ, skola och samhälle”, page 113 (translator’s note: The Individual, School and Society)

⁴⁵ See for example the account for Dewey’s view on thinking and knowledge in Gert Biesta’s article “Kunskapande som ett sätt att handla”, 2004 (translator’s note: Creation of Knowledge as a Means of Acting)”

Adler's Socratic seminars are in turn a complement to the Freinet pedagogical practice. Through using Adler's columns the didactic content and role of the teacher in the Freinet practice becomes clarified. Adler's Paideia practice can on the other hand benefit from Freinet's clear and systematic work method and with the children's daily problems of moral, discipline and nurturing through evaluations/assemblies and wall newspapers, where children and teachers work out problems together, discuss, criticise and commend each other in the work group.

It seems therefore quite possible to both integrate Socratic seminars within the frames of Freinet pedagogy and to use Freinet pedagogical ideas within the Paideia movement. To be able to do so however, one must, as Adler did in later years, disregard the philosophical antagonism between on the one hand Dewey's (and likely Freinet's) view that values are relative, and on the other hand Adler's view that there is a collection of constant values. One must instead establish that the practical pedagogy still gives rise to the same method of working and probably the same result – people who reflect over essential questions. Is it possible? Dewey's, Adler's and Freinet's texts are an invitation to continue thinking about, discussing and developing the presented ideas, a great Socratic ongoing seminar, where right now I am contributing with this text.

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